



Genital Herpes

Herpes is a common infection. It is caused by a virus. This virus can infect both the mouth and genitals. Herpes **Type 1** virus causes most oral infections. People call these “cold sores.” **Type 2** virus causes most genital herpes. But both types can give you sores in either place. Having one type does not mean that you can't get the other.

The virus is passed from the part of the skin that has the virus to skin that touches it. The virus can travel in warm body fluids.

Sex contact when sores or blisters are present is one way to spread the virus. Doctors have warned since 1990 that herpes can be spread even if there are no sores. **New research** shows that about 60 to 70 percent of herpes is spread by people who don't know they have it.

What Are the Signs?

If symptoms do occur, they come two to 21 days after contact with a person who has the virus. Fluid-filled sores appear. They may itch, burn, tingle or cause pain. Flu-like symptoms are sometimes felt. The first outbreak of sores usually lasts one to three weeks. Then scabs form.

After the first sores heal, the virus stays hidden. More outbreaks may occur later—how often is different for each person. Later outbreaks have fewer sores. They heal faster, and they are less painful than the first time.

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Women and Herpes

Millions of women with herpes have had healthy babies. If a woman or **any** of her sex partners has ever had herpes, she should be sure to tell her doctor.

It can be very serious when a woman gets herpes for the first time while she is pregnant.

Is There a Test?

Yes. Testing the sores when they are new and full of fluid is best. Other tests measure blood to see if people have had herpes in the past.

All women who have ever had herpes must have a PAP test once a year.

What Is the Treatment?

There is no cure for herpes. But, medicine your doctor can order may make the sores less painful and heal faster. Talk about a plan for treatment if you have many outbreaks each year.

Herpes and AIDS

The herpes and AIDS viruses are not the same. But, herpes sores are an easy way for HIV/AIDS or other STD germs to enter a person's body during sex. That is why people should **never have sex when the herpes sores are present.**

Condoms must be used with all sex partners to help prevent herpes.

Where Can I Learn More?

If you have questions, call your doctor, local health department, or community clinic.

Or call the National STD Hotline at **1-800-227-8922.**



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